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ABSTRACT

By using exercises to increase classroom community and journal assignments rather than tests, teachers can help empower students in the public speaking classroom. To create a sense of community in public speaking classrooms and to increase opportunities for dialogue on a personal level, an ungraded speaking assignment is used that begins the first day of class. Journal assignments are an excellent way to bridge a student's past experiences or private deliberations with their classroom presentations. Informal writing in the journal is assigned to help students internalize and experience reading and lecture materials. Small group meetings begin as informal sharing about individual class presentations and continue throughout the semester to build foundations for a more refined evaluation process. The most problematic aspect of implementing feminist pedagogy--or connected learning techniques--in the classroom has been the dogmatic method of evaluation which is teacher-as-authoritarian centered. A multi-faceted evaluation system helps empower students and helps them to recognize their academic voices, while also establishing the teacher-as-facilitator. (One appendix with sample journal entries is attached.) (MG)

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"Implementing Feminist Pedagogy in the Public Speaking Course"

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Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention in San Francisco, CA, 1989.

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All too often in the public speaking classroom, we fail to develop a continuum between our student's personal thoughts and experiences and their classroom presentations. We expect our students to go "public" with their ideas without the opportunity to develop those thoughts and receive feedback before they must formally present their ideas. We don't often encourage or nurture the incorporation of their personal experiences into classroom projects. In short, we often view public speaking presentations as products, not as a process.

Yet one of the central goals of connected learning--or feminist pedagogy--is to help empower students so they can actively participate in the learning process (Blekeny, Clinchy, Goldberg and Taurle, 1986). A feminized model of education has to recognize the authenticity of students' personal experiences and use instructional methods and grading practices that help students find their own voices (Powell, 1987; Braid, 1987). As speech teachers we must "find ways of inducing students to carry their ways of being into the classroom" and incorporate those experiences into the learning process (Braid, 1987, p. 19).

I believe that by using exercises to increase classroom community, journal assignments rather than tests or quizzes, small group meetings, and a mutually oriented evaluation system, we can help empower students in the public speaking classroom. In this paper, I will discuss several of the techniques that I have incorporated into my public speaking class as an ongoing effort to connect my students' personal experiences with the course content. The techniques I discuss are still evolving.

To create a sense of community in my public speaking classroom and to increase opportunities for dialogue on a personal level, I use an ungraded speaking assignment that begins the first day of class. Each student is asked to pair up with another classmate that he or she does not know. I explain that each student will have twenty minutes to interview their partner. I encourage my students to ask more than mundane and surface-level questions by sharing some extended examples of other students' responses to their favorite vacation, their dream vacation, their life philosophy as a bumper sticker, their most embarrassing moment, their family's misadventures or their wishes for an epitaph. I always participate. Either I pair up with a student or I begin the "getting to know you" session with my own introduction, because it is critical that students sense my willingness to join them in the learning process.

I stress the ungraded aspect and let my students know that we will sit in a circle and speak informally as we introduce our partners. With the 27 students I normally have in my class, this exercise is time-consuming because after each introduction, other classmates and I ask questions of the student who has just been introduced. However, the assignment works well to create a sense of community as we establish who we are, to build a context for further speeches, and to foster recognition and appreciation for the resources each student brings to the public speaking classroom: three important elements of a participatory learning environment (Marshall, 1989).

Bringing individual experiences into the content and the context of the class can create a holistic approach to learning in the public-speaking classroom, if there is a specific method to link the student's prior experiences with the course content. I have found that journal assignments are an excellent way to bridge a student's past experiences or private deliberations with their classroom presentations.

I designed my journal assignments so students can handle content issues as well as organizational and mechanical ones in the context of their prior experiences (see Appendix A). I try to incorporate opportunities to share journals with different classmates. Thus, the journal assignments, carefully designed, can empower students with their own authority on a subject and build toward a successful first speech.

Informal writing in the journal is assigned to help students internalize and experience reading and lecture materials. I have entries where students brainstorm speech topics for their first informative speech and then prioritize those topics. By having students informally share these ideas, they begin to understand the concept of audience analysis. Sometimes, I begin class by having students do some free writing in their journals to list questions and problems they are having with an upcoming speaking assignment. This procedure seems to generate more discussion and benefits everyone's understanding of the assignment.

Writing in journals is not done in the traditional sense to get a grade, but to involve students in the process of dealing

with the text (Emig, 1983; Fulwiler & Young, 1982). For full credit, I only require evidence that the student has grappled with the assignment. In grading the journals, I am able to identify major problems before students speak in front of the class and provide constructive feedback.

Small group meetings are another way students receive feedback. Small group meetings begin as informal sharing about individual class presentations and continue throughout the semester to build foundations for a more refined evaluation process. Four or five students, with a common meeting time, meet after each graded speech round. The groups begin with simple questions to consider the content and quality of one another's speeches.

Basically, group members review each other's speeches: what they did well and what needs improving. I provide a set of basic questions that they can use and then let them assume more and more responsibility for quiding each other's evaluations. For the first informative speaking assignment, group members concentrate on the strengths and weaknesses in illustrations, examples, and organization. Later in discussing persuasive speeches, the groups address the use of logical, emotional, and ethical appeals; how well the message was adapted to the audience; and how successful they were in persuading the audience.

The small group meetings provide another forum for involvement and create a more intimate environment for evaluation

(Marshall, 1989). Students need ways to share without being competitive or threatened, and I believe that students come back to class more secure and willing to try again because of the support and careful evaluation they received in their small groups.

One of the basic tools for discussion in the small groups is generated by having a mutually oriented evaluation system. Each group member hands in an evaluation of the other members' speeches before the group meeting as part of my three pronged grading system.

Students receive one-third of their grade from the members of their small group, one-third from their own self evaluation and one third from my evaluation of their speech. The goal is to actively involve students in the evaluation process in order to demistify the grading process and to sharpen students' analytical and listening skills.

Peer evaluations are completed using criteria for each speaking assignment as a guide. However, rather than using a point system or a letter grade, I find it is easier for students to rate each other's speeches from "excellent" to "poor" and provide a narrative justifying their reasoning. The self evaluation uses the same criteria but includes a grade and a narrative justifying that grade in terms of the assignment. My grade is based on the assignment but is more detailed and specific in the areas I feel need improvement. If there is a large discrepancy between the three grades, I will meet with the

student to discuss his or her final grade.

The most problematic aspect of implementing feminist pedagogy--or connected learning techniques--in the classroom has been the dogmatic method of evaluation which is teacher-as-authoritarian centered (Braid, 1987; Marshall, 1989). A multi-faceted evaluation system helps empower students and helps them to recognize their academic voices, plus establishes teacher-as-learning facilitator.

I believe that connected knowing methods of instruction are more time-consuming, yet are significantly more satisfying for teachers and students. Teaching methods that by pass the politics of inquiry by actively engaging students in the learning and evaluation process empower students. Feminist methods of instruction in the public speaking classroom that embrace the students' past experiences, nurture their understanding of the course content, and encourage them to use topics that are meaningful to them and their audience produce more competent and confident public speakers.

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APPENDIX A:

JOURNAL ENTRIES

Students will be required to keep a journal in a spiral notebook throughout the entire semester. The journal entries are done independently as ways of exploring, probing and speculating on the material covered in class. Its basic purpose is to help guide students in their personal understanding of course materials.

Often these journal entries will be shared with other members of the class, who will respond in writing to your ideas and arguments. At other times you will be asked to read your entry to the class and we will as a group share our responses.

The topic, idea or question for the weekly entry will involve the assigned readings for that particular week. The journal will be graded based upon the effort a student makes to grapple with that week's topics. NO LATE JOURNALS WILL BE ACCEPTED!

JANUARY ENTRIES

Journal Entry One: Using your reading as a guide, choose a familiar topic. Some examples might be dorm-living, financial aid, test taking skills, etc. Construct a purpose statement, a thesis, a main point outline, an introduction, and conclusion.

Journal Entry Two: Using your readings as a guide, fill out table 8.1 on page 93 to analyze your classroom audience. You will be discussing your findings with another classmate.

Journal Entry Three: In your journal make a brain storm list of several topics you might consider for your first informative speech. Remember this speech might be about a favorite spot for a vacation, an interesting hobby, something you are studying as long as it will fulfill the needs of your audience. After you have at least a dozen topic, prioritize the first five and be prepared to exchange journals with other classmates.

Journal Entry Four: Select the most likely topic and write a specific and general purpose statement, a thesis and extended thesis.

Journal Entry Five: Obviously you will want to read an overview article on your topic first. Then select and write two different outline patterns for your topic. Which one do you like best and why?

Journal Entry Six: Using Journal entry four's topic, write appropriate examples of how you would use each of the five types of amplification considered in your readings (examples and illustrations, testimony, definitions, statistics, and audiovisual aids). Are these appropriate for use with your topic, why or why not?

FEBRUARY ENTRIES

Journal Entry Nine: There are two ways to learn about audience characteristics. One is to make generalizations about what the audience thinks based on the kind of people you think they are. The second method is to test for attitudes by systematically polling a representative sample of the audience. Pick a broad topic you are considering for your persuasive speech. Then in detail describe what generalizations you might make about your classmate's attitudes, values and beliefs. Next survey at least six other people in class and write about your findings. After you compare the results, summarize the thesis, claims, and premises you might use to approach your topic.

Journal Entry Ten: Observe some of the experts or spokespersons using persuasion (ABC's Nightline, Town Hall etc.). Try to identify the thesis and supporting arguments for both sides. See if you can match them or think of opposing arguments.